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**MY HOLIDAY GIFT TO YOU**

By Teresa Becher

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It could happen to anyone — company holiday party, cocktails with friends, meeting your buddies at the bar. It's time to go home. You find your keys, walk out to your car and put the key in the ignition. If you're smart, you remember to put on your seat belt.

You think you're fine — you're not having any trouble walking and you're not slurring your words. After all, you've done it before and you've only had a few beers tonight. No problem. You'll be home in time to tuck your kids into bed and catch the news.

You're only a few miles from home. You stay in your lane and carefully stop at all the stop signs. You're just about to turn the corner when you spot the red lights in your rearview mirror. Or maybe you drove through that sobriety checkpoint. You were so careful though. How did you get caught?

Or maybe you're the guy who brags about how many six-packs he can down in an hour. Or maybe you want to get you money's worth from that open bar at the party. How you're going to get home never even enters your mind.

What you didn't count on is the fact that thousands of law enforcement officers all over California are putting in extra hours to make sure they get you off the roads. You. The guy or gal who thought that they were okay to drive after a few drinks, or even just one drink. More than 176,000 DUI arrests were made in California last year.

(more)

Don't kid yourself into thinking that it can't happen to you. It doesn't matter if you're driving a Lexus or a mini van. California will not tolerate impaired driving on our roadways during the holidays or at any time of the year. Consider this warning my early holiday gift to you and your family. Don't drink and drive.

*\*Statistics from Department of Motor Vehicles 2002 DUI-MIS Report.*